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SC WILL EXAMINE SEDITION LAW'S CONSTITUTIONAL VALIDITY

A 3-judge bench led by Chief Justice B R Gavai issued notice to the Centre on a PIL against the validity of Section 152 (sedition) of BNS

'REBRANDED VERSION' OF SEDITION LAW

Section 152 of BNS deals with the 'act endangering sovereignty, unity and integrity of India'. A PIL filed by retired Major General S G Vombatkere, an Army veteran, called Section 152 a "rebranded version" of the sedition law, previously kept in abeyance by SC in July 2022 pending legislative review. Despite this, the new legislation reinstates sedition under a new label

PIL SAYS LAW IS LIABLE TO BE STRUCK DOWN

- The plea said the BNS provision was violative of Articles 14 (right to equality), 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech and expression) and 21 (right to life) of the Constitution; and was liable to be struck down
- Section 152 criminalises acts done 'purposely or knowingly', yet neither term is defined in the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, the plea said

Sec 124A

CHALLENGE TO THIS LAW HAS ALSO BEEN TAGGED ALONG WITH SEC 152

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

HIGH-STAKES DIALOGUE

Had a very good and detailed conversation with my friend President Putin... We discussed Ukraine and reviewed our bilateral ties

During our call, we exchanged opinions on key issues of the bilateral agenda, including trade, economic and investment cooperation

Modi, Putin call amid tariff pain, Ukraine summit

Russian leader holds consultations ahead of his talks with Trump on ending Ukraine war

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin held a high-stakes phone conversation on Friday, reaffirming their commitment to deepen India-Russia ties amid intensifying US pressure over New Delhi's energy dealings with Moscow.

The call comes on the heels of a major escalation by the US, where President Donald Trump signed an executive order slapping a steep 50% tariff on Indian imports of Russian oil, seen widely as a direct warning to India over its continued energy partnership with Russia.

"Had a very good and detailed conversation with my friend President Putin," Modi posted on social media platform X. "We reviewed progress in our bilateral agenda and reaffirmed our commitment to further deepen the India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership."

The two leaders also discussed the ongoing Ukraine conflict. According to an official Indian readout, Putin briefed Modi on "the latest developments concerning Ukraine," while Modi reiterated India's consistent call for "a peaceful resolution of the conflict." The diplomatic timing is notable. The call comes a day after Modi spoke with Brazilian President Lula da Silva—another US trading partner hit with a 50% tariff—and amid reports of an accelerating Trump-Putin summit, possibly as early as next week.

Adding to the geopolitical complexity, Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov confirmed Thursday that a venue had been selected for the proposed Trump-Putin meeting. While the official location remains undisclosed, Putin suggested that the United Arab Emirates would be a "suitable" host.

In a further twist, Ushakov revealed discussions of a possible three-way summit involving Trump, Putin, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The Kremlin has yet to comment officially on that possibility. For his part, Putin expressed cautious openness to meeting Zelenskyy, but added that "certain conditions should be created," stressing that the current situation is "far" from ideal. For his part, Trump said he did not consider a Putin-Zelenskyy meeting a prerequisite for his own summit with the Russian leader.

Amid the shifting global dynamics, New Delhi's balancing act is increasingly under the spotlight. On the multilateral front, China officially welcomed Modi's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Tianjin later this month.

NO TRADE TALKS

US President Trump ruled out any trade talks with India until the tariff issue is resolved. "No, not until we get it resolved," Trump said in the Oval Office on Thursday

Will prove voter theft if 10-year data given: Rahul's dare to poll panel

LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi shares chocolates with CM Siddaramaiah and DCM DK Shivakumar at the 'voter theft' rally in Bengaluru on Friday | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @ Bengaluru

CONTINUING his tirade against the Election Commission of India (ECI) and BJP government at the Centre, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said here on Friday that if EC provides him ten years of data -- the electronic voters' list and videography of the polling stations, he can prove theft of voters in several Lok Sabha seats across the country.

Addressing a big rally organised by Congress here, he hit back at EC saying, "The Election Commission asks me for an affidavit. They say I have to take an oath. I have taken an oath on the Constitution in Parliament. Today, when the people of the country are asking questions about data, the ECI has shut down its website in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. The ECI knows that if the public starts asking them questions, their entire structure will collapse."

He said, "If EC gives us electronic data, we will prove that Narendra Modi became Prime Minister by stealing votes. Modi is the PM because of a margin of just 25 seats. We have proven that Bengaluru Central LS seat was stolen. BJP won 25 seats with margins of less than 35,000 votes. If they (ECI) don't give this data, it will mean they are helping BJP in vote theft."

He said, "It took us six months to find out the truth of one assembly segment -- Mahadevapura in Bengaluru Central LS seat. If EC doesn't give us data, we can do the same thing in other seats as well. We do have paper copies. The EC cannot hide the truth, and it cannot hide itself. One day, it will have to face the Opposition. Every election officer should understand that. It's a criminal act against people."

After the rally, Congress leaders, including Rahul, were scheduled to present a memorandum to the ECI office in Bengaluru. P4

RAHUL'S FIVE

- Why is ECI not giving a voter list in a digital machine readable format to the people of India?
- Why is ECI destroying video evidence?
- Why is ECI committing massive fraud in the voters' list?
- Why is ECI threatening opposition instead of answering our questions?
- Why is ECI behaving like an agent of the BJP?

SC verdict in Nath case rejected plea for digital list of voters, says ECI

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

REJECTING Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi's allegations of voter list manipulation, the ECI on Friday pointed out that the Congress-led Karnataka government itself is using the same electoral rolls for its caste census exercise. It dared him to sign a formal declaration for his claims or apologise to the nation.

Regardless of the format of the complaint, it's the EC's job to purify the rolls whenever discrepancies are pointed out. Sources in the ECI said that the Karnataka cabinet approved the use of electoral rolls as the base for conducting a caste survey. "At the same time LoP (Rahul Gandhi) was dropping the 'atom bomb' on electoral rolls, the Congress government was vouching for their authenticity by basing their most important policy of caste census on them," a source said.

ECI officials argued that Rahul was repeating a tired script. "In 2018, they (then MP Congress chief Kamal Nath), tried to mislead SC by producing documents from a private website to demonstrate there are errors in the electoral rolls, saying same face was shown for 36 voters," an official said.

"But, the defects had already been rectified four months before Nath made the allegations and a copy of revised rolls was supplied to the party. Yet, Nath sought the poll rolls in a searchable pdf format. The SC refused to entertain it, agreeing with the EC's position that it would compromise voter privacy."

"The Nath judgment gives a settled position on machine readable document. Raising the same issues again shows that Rahul has no respect for the SC," the official charged.

SC deletes its observations against sitting HC judge after CJI's intervention

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Friday deleted its observations criticising Allahabad High Court judge Prashant Kumar for allowing criminal proceedings in a civil dispute case, clarifying that its "intention was not to embarrass or cast aspersions on him".

In its order on August 4, a bench of justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan had taken strong exception to Justice Kumar's handling of a case for treating a civil dispute as a criminal case. The bench barred the judge from hearing criminal matters till his retirement, adding, "The Allahabad High Court chief justice shall make the judge sit in a division bench with a seasoned senior HC judge."

However, the SC's caustic verdict ran into constitutional trouble as the HC CJ is the master of roster, not the the SC. While CJI Gavai was exploring ways to remedy the situation, 13 judges of the Allahabad High Court urged their Chief Justice Arun Bhansali to convene a full court meeting and refuse compliance with the SC order. With the situation snowballing, the CJI urged the Pardiwala bench to reconsider its fiat.

The revised verdict read, "We fully acknowledge that the HC CJ is the master of the roster... (But) When matters raise institutional concerns affecting the rule of law, this court may be compelled to step in and take corrective steps."

EXPRESS READ

SIT searches new location in Dharmasthala case

MANGALURU: The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the Dharmasthala mass burial case searched a new location in Boliyar on Friday, based on information from the complainant-witness | P4

BJP MPs booked for forced entry into sanctum

RANCHI: The Jharkhand Police registered an FIR against BJP MPs Nishikant Dubey and Manoj Tiwari for 'forcibly' entering the sanctum of the Baba Baidyanath Temple in Deoghar on August 2 and hurting religious sentiments.

Nirmala pulls I-T bill in Lok Sabha, set to table final version on Monday

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday withdrew the Income Tax Bill 2025, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha on February 13 to replace the Income Tax Act 1961. A fresh version of the bill, incorporating most of the recommendations of the Select Committee chaired by BJP member Baijayant Panda, will be tabled in the House on Monday.

Sources said the earlier draft was withdrawn to avoid confusion due to multiple versions of the legislation and to present a consolidated text with all changes included.

The finance ministry said the government has accepted almost all recommendations of the Select Committee. Suggestions were also received from other sources regarding fine-tuning the language to convey the correct legislative meaning. The 31-member Select Committee, which submitted its report to the Lok Sabha last month, proposed over 30 major amendments to the bill. These include changes in the definitions of 'capital asset', 'infrastructure capital company', 'MSME', clarifications on property-related deductions, and reinforcement of the 'actual payment' rule for claiming business expenses.

One significant proposal is the reinstatement of a provision allowing the tax department to issue nil withholding tax certificates for specific payments — a clause dropped in the February draft, which only permitted low TDS certificates. The panel also recommended permitting refund claims even if the returns are filed late.

For charitable and not-for-profit entities, the panel suggested replacing 'receipts' with 'income' for tax purposes, restoring the concept of 'deemed application', and providing clearer definitions. In a relief to corporates, the panel said the deduction for inter-corporate dividends in multi-tiered structures should also apply to firms opting for the 22% tax rate, as is the case under current law.

WHAT IS CHANGING

1. Earlier draft bill had some errors leading to confusion. The new version will simplify clauses
2. Revised bill will allow income tax refund claims even if the returns are filed late; earlier provision had tied refunds to ITR being filed within 'due date' and this denied refunds to those who missed the deadline for filing ITRs due to genuine reasons
3. Draft bill had inadvertently deleted the words "no deduction", resulting in removing the concept of nil TDS certificates. The revised bill reinstates that
4. Anonymous donations made to religious-cum-charitable trusts will be exempt from tax; however, trusts that run hospitals and educational institutions will be subject to tax

Vishnuvardhan 'memorial' razed overnight; fans stage protest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

HUNDREDS of fans of the late Kannada superstar **Dr Vishnuvardhan** gathered outside Abhiman Studio near Kengeri on Friday, after a structure at the place where he was cremated was demolished overnight.

The agitated fans staged a protest outside the studio and expressed their anger against the state government and the Kannada Film Chamber of Commerce for neglecting the place.

Vishnuvardhan's last rites were performed on the premises of Abhiman Studio when he passed away on December 30, 2009. Fans had long been demanding a permanent memorial for the actor and had urged the authorities to resolve the property dispute. The studio belonged to the family of veteran Kannada actor Balakrishna. P5

REBUILDING LIVES

Rescue workers engage in the reconstruction of a bridge, which was washed away in the recent flash floods, on the Gangotri National Highway near Gangani, in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand, on Friday | PTI

SEP panel gives report to CM, favours 2-language policy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Karnataka State Education Policy (SEP) Commission submitted its long-awaited report to the state government on Friday. Among its most significant recommendations is a two-language policy, Kannada or mother tongue along with English, for all schools, doing away with the Centre's National Language Policy's three-language formula.

The commission has recommended to the government to make Kannada or mother tongue the medium of instruction up to Class 5 in all boards. Commission chairman Sukhadeo Thorat submitted the first of the six-volume report to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah here.

A major structural change proposed is adoption of a 2+8+4 system — two years of pre-primary, eight years of primary, and four years of secondary education. The commission has proposed to extend the Right to Education (RTE) Act, currently applicable up to the age of 14, to 18 (4–18).

The report calls for making secondary education universal and building residential schools for migrant children.

The commission has stressed the need to bring government schools on par with Kendriya Vidyalayas. To ensure this, it has recommended to the government to end hiring of contract and guest teachers and put in place a separate regulatory authority for private schools. CONTINUED ON P3

Security guard murders 14-yr-old nephew over online game addiction

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A man killed his 14-year-old nephew who was addicted to online games and frequently pestered him for money. Four days after the crime, the man surrendered before the Soladevanahalli police on Thursday, who later recovered the decomposed body.

The accused has been identified as Nagaprasad (50), a security guard. The deceased, Amogha Keerthi (14), was a Class 7 student of a private school. Amogha had been living with his uncle for the past eight months in Kumbarahalli, Vinayaka Layout. His mother, Shilpa, was separated from her husband before Amogha's birth and was living alone for the last eight months. CONTINUED ON P3